2 Trade in America 54.

CANDID AND IMPARTIAL NARRATIVE

OF THE

TRANSACTIONS

OF THE

FLEET,

UNDER THE COMMAND OF

LORD HOWE,

FROM THE ARRIVAL OF THE TOULON SQUADRON, ON THE COAST OF AMERICA, TO THE TIME OF HIS LORDSHIP'S DEPARTURE FOR ENGLAND.

WITH

OBSERVATIONS.

BY AN OFFICER THEN SERVING IN THE FLEET.

LONDON:

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE deſign of the following Narrative, is to do juſtice to a great and good man, by the beſt mode of juſtification that can be offered in his favour; a plain ſtate of facts, an impartial account of his actions, ſubmitted to public view. The writer acknowledges that he has not the honour of being in Lord Howe's ſecrets, or of being even diſtantly connected with him: yet the facts he relates will bear the ſtricteſt ſcrutiny, in point of truth; and his obſervations on thoſe facts, ſhall be ſuch as he formed on the ſpot; as aroſe from his own feelings at the time, or were ſuggeſted to him by officers of the firſt character, both in the navy and army. If he aſſign the reaſons and motives of any of his Lordſhip's operations, or advert to the inſtructions and intelligence communicated to him from home, he does it from ſubſequent information, and chiefly from his Lordſhip's public letters.

He ſhall endeavour as much as poſſible to avoid a technical ſtyle; for he wiſhes to be underſtood by every claſs of readers: yet, at the ſame time, he muſt apologize to the public for obtruding on them the rough unpoliſhed language of a ſeaman, littled verſed in the elegancies of compoſition, and unambitious of the praiſe of a brilliant diction, or the ſmooth flow of well-rounded periods. He ſhall often have occaſion to advert to our preſent diſ-

graceful ſituation; and ſome times to look forward to thoſe additional miſeries which infalibly await our perſeverance in the deſtructive meaſures hitherto purſued, by a weak, ignorant Miniſtry: and while he points out to his oppreſſed countrymen the deſtroying ſword hanging over their heads, and ſuſpended but by a ſingle hair, he cannot think that any among them will be ſo egregiouſly trifling, as to ſpend the time in examining its point, or determining whether it glitters or not.

His chief apology ſhould be to the noble Lord, whoſe actions he attempts to relate. It will prove no very acceptable ſervice, he fears, to his lordſhip, to be brought thus forward; or that a ſtranger ſhould attempt what his own connections ſeem, by their ſilence, to think unneceſſary. But he owns he has not philoſophy enough to ſtifle his indignation, when he ſees his gallant Commander, whom he has learned to revere for every great and good quality that can adorn the man or the officer, at the mercy of a deſpicable, unprincipled junto. He thinks the public have a right to be informed of the important ſervices Lord Howe has rendered to his country; and of the ungrateful return he has met with at the hands, not of his country, but of ſome of the ſervants of the crown.

The narrative is confined to that period, in which the writer had the honour to ſerve under his Lordſhip. His conduct in America, previous to that time, when thoroughly inveſtigated, will prove to have been of a piece with the whole tenor of his life; will redown to his own honour, and the diſappointment and confuſion of his enemies.

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CANDID AND IMPARTIAL

NARRATIVE.

IN conſequence of the advices from England, with which the Porcupine arrived in the Delaware, in the beginning of May, Lord Howe began immediately to collect his ſcattered force. To the ſurprize of thoſe who were ignorant of his motives, he called in his cruizers from the Cheſapeak, and the other parts of the coaſt, and ordered the large ſhips from Rhode Iſland and New York to aſſemble at the mouth of the Delaware. The tranſports and victuallers were cleared from the wharves of Philadelphia with as much expedition as the moving of the army would admit; and on the 18th of June, Sir H. Clinton having completed the evacuation of Philadelphia, and entered the Jerſeys on his rout to New York, the whole fleet aſſembled below Reedy Iſland. The large ſhips, as well thoſe which had been ordered from Newport, as thoſe which were ſtationed in the harbour of New York, were very imprudently detained by Rear Admiral Gambier, from the idea

of the Vice Admiral being on the point of ſailing for that port.

On leaving the Delaware, which calms and contrary winds rendered impracticable till the 28th of June, Lord Howe divided the fleet into different ſquadrons, each ſquadron under the immediate inſpection of particular Captains, and ordering Captain Hammond to remain about the Capes, with ſome light cruizers, proceeded in the Eagle to New York, attended by the Trident, carrying the Commiſſioners, and the Maidſtone frigate.

The fleet was particularly fortunate in its paſſage. The Eagle anchored at the Hook, the day [*June* 29.] after ſhe had cleared Cape Henlopen, and we all joined her the following evening. By equal good fortune, Sir H. Clinton gained the Heights of Neverſink the ſucceeding morning, after a long and fatiguing march. Waſhington had for ſeveral days, hung on his rear, and harraſſed him by ſmall parties, till by endeavouring, on the 28th, to cut off the baggage of the Engliſh army, he brought on a ſharp action at Freehold, wherein our rear guard repulſed two large detachments under La Fayette and Lee, and beat them back to the main body of the rebel army, purſuing them for four miles with much ſlaughter. The chief loſs ſuſtained by the Britiſh, was the death of Col. Monkton, one of the braveſt officers in the army, and of the beſt beloved.

June 29. The morning of the day on which Lord Howe arrived at the Hook, he was met at ſea by the Grantham packet, expreſs from England. She brought advice that the Toulon ſquadron had ſailed for America on the 15th of April; and informed his Lordſhip, that ſhe had been chaſed by them, in a ſouthern latitude, at no great diſtance

from

from the coaſt. Her diſpatches, bearing date the 3d of May, mentioned a ſtrong reinforcement to be ſent immediately under Vice Admiral Byron *for Halifax.*

The utmoſt expedition was now requiſite to take off the troops, that, with the tranſports and victuallers, they might be placed in ſafety, and the fleet got in readineſs for ſea, to act as circumſtances ſhould require, and with a view to the deſtination of the ſquadron under Admiral Byron. The enemy did not dare to paſs the heights of Middleton. The ſick and wounded were therefore embarked without moleſtation, and the artillery and baggage taken off, while a bridge of boats was throwing over the channel that ſeparates Sandy-Hook from the main. This work was intruſted to Captain Duncan, and executed with the uſual zeal and promptitude of that vigilant and induſtrious officer. On the 5th of *July* the whole army paſſed into the iſland, and from thence were carried in flat boats on board the fleet, without the loſs of a man. Lord Howe attended in perſon, as uſual; and by his preſence animated the zeal, and quickened the induſtry, of officers and men.

This important ſervice was ſcarce performed, and Commodore Hotham, with the men of war that lay off the town of New-York, arrived at the Hook, [*July* 7.] when a lieutenant from Captain Gardiner, whom the vice admiral had diſpatched to the ſouthward on the firſt of *July*, returned in a letter of marque, acquainting his Lordſhip, that the Toulon ſquadron was ſeen by the Maidſtone, on the coaſt of Virginia, the 5th of the month. That, by their courſe, they ſeemed at firſt to be bound for the Cheſapeak; but that on attending their motions to the morning of the 8th, Captain

Gardiner

Gardiner had left them at anchor in the Delaware. This account was confirmed the ſame evening, by the arrival of the Roebuck, and ſome of our ſmall cruizers; and while the vice-admiral was employed, in conſequence, in collecting his ſmall force, and preparing for every emergency, the captain of the Zebra arrived [*July* 11.] on board the Eagle, bringing intelligence, that a fleet of 12 ſail of two-deck ſhips, and three frigates, appeared the evening before, under French colours, holding their courſe for New-York. At 12 o'clock the ſame day, a ſignal was made, from one of our frigates without the bar, that they had hove in ſight; and in the afternoon they were obſerved to come to anchor off Shrewſbury inlet, about four miles from Sandy-Hook.

It is not in the power of words to do juſtice to the ſpirit that blazed forth throughout the navy and army on this occaſion. Six ſail of ſixty-four gun ſhips, three of fifty, two of forty, with ſome frigates and ſloops, for the moſt part wretchedly manned, were all the force Lord Howe had to oppoſe to twelve ſail of two-deck ſhips, and three frigates. Of theſe one carried 90 guns, one 80, ſix were of 74 guns, three of 64, one of 50; the leaſt of the frigates mounted 36. Their complement in men was above eleven thouſand. Yet the ſpirit of Britons, rouſed by the ſuperior genius of one man, and influenced to ſecond his exertions to a height of emulation ſcarcely paralleled in hiſtory, ſet them at defiance.

A thouſand volunteers from the tranſports preſented themſelves to man the fleet. Scarce could the agents detain ſufficient hands for the watch of their reſpective ſhips. Many, whoſe names were omitted in the liſts given in to the adjutant of the fleet, were found concealed in the boats which carried

ried their more fortunate companions on board the ſeveral men of war. The army, idolatrous of the admiral's character, were equally forward and impatient to ſignalize their zeal, in a line of ſervice, new, and, independent of the ſpirit that animated them, unpleaſant and diſguſting to men unaccuſtomed to a ſea-life. The grenadiers and light-infantry, ſcarcely recruited from the fatigues of a toilſome and dangerous march; many of the officers, with their wounds ſtill green, were obliged to caſt lots, to determine the companies which, with the general's approbation, were accepted to ſerve as marines—The maſters and mates of the merchantmen and traders in the harbour, ſolicited employment with equal earneſtneſs and ſpirit. Several of them took their ſtations at the guns with the common ſailors; others obtained permiſſion to put out to ſea in their ſmall ſwift-ſailing ſhallops, to alarm ſuch ſhips as might be bound for the port, and to look out for Byron's fleet, if fortunately it ſhould reach the coaſt. One, in particular, his name was Duncan, with a ſpirit of diſintereſted bravery, and in language worthy of an old Roman, wrote for leave to convert his ſhip, the whole hopes of his fortune, into a fire-veſſel, to be conducted by himſelf; rejecting every mention of reward.

In this ſtruggle of magnanimity, it was obſerved, with rapture, that the ſpirit which had raiſed the Britiſh nation above the reſt of Europe for ſo many ages paſt, was not extinct; that it only wanted to be awakened, and properly directed, to blaze out with as bright a luſtre as ever diſtinguiſhed the moſt fortunate and brilliant of our days. From the commanders and officers thoſe ſallies of heroiſm were naturally expected; their education, the ſeeds plant-

ed in their minds from their earlieſt infancy, and cheriſhed by the ſpirit of their profeſſion, it was natural to expect would produce ſuch ſentiments as fit and prepare the mind for theſe ſudden and trying emergencies. But in the common men it was the ſpontaneous growth of the ſoil we ſaw exuberantly breaking forth; and as long as this flouriſhed, there would be no reaſon to deſpair of the health and vigour of the country.

Such were the ſentiments, ſuch the reflections throughout the fleet and army; and all gloried in them, as reflecting honour on their country. But what muſt have been the feelings of that man, who ſhared the glory with his country; and who, notwithſtanding the unaffected modeſty of his character, muſt have been conſcious that all this zeal and emulation, in both corps, was as much perſonal to himſelf, as he boaſted it to be national?

Encouraged by ſuch earneſts of determined bravery in the men, and aſſured of the merit and ſkill of his ſeconds and officers, he loſt not a moment in forming his diſpoſition. The Eagle and Trident, the Iſis, Roebuck, Phœnix, and Pearl, which had moved up to Staten Iſland to take in water, with the Ardent, from which Gambier had been ordered to ſhift his flag, fell down from the watering place on the firſt intimation of the approach of the French. A contrary wind preventing them from joining the detachment of the ſquadron that had been left at the Hook, with all the expedition the danger ſeemed to require, the vice admiral quitted the Eagle, and throwing himſelf into his barge, haſtened to the ſhips below. But D'Eſtaing, inſtead of croſſing the bar immediately, in the hope of ſurpriſing our fleet, which it was natural to ſuppoſe he came prepared to attempt, anchored, as is

mentioned

mentioned before, at the diſtance of four miles from the Hook.

Here he remained for ſeveral days, employed at times in ſounding the bar, and wearing every appearance of a determination to enter and attack the port. Lord Howe improved this interval by placing his ſhips in the ſtrongeſt poſition the channel within the Hook would admit. He ſounded its ſeveral depths in perſon; he aſcertained the different ſetting of the currents, and from the obſervations thus made, formed different plans with a view to the points of wind with which D'Eſtaing might reſolve to croſs the bar. Theſe plans, with the grounds on which they reſted, he daily communicated to the commodores and captains, ſoliciting their opinions, and deſirous of profiting by their objections. His line he lengthened by the addition of the Leviathan ſtore-ſhip, manned by volunteers for the occaſion, and ſupplied with cannon from the train. A battery of two howitzers, and one of three eighteen-pounders, were erected on the point round which the enemy muſt have paſſed to enter the channel; while four regiments, under the commond of Colonel O'Hara, were ordered by General Clinton to the Hook, leſt the enemy ſhould attempt to poſſeſs it, and annoy us from ſo dangerous a quarter.

In the mean time, we had the daily mortification to ſee ſeveral of our traders fall into the enemy's hands. The Stanley armed brig, commanded by a gallant young man, ſon to Sir Charles Whitworth, with five prizes, anchored in the midſt of their fleet, during the night, thinking them to be Britiſh, and was boarded before he could diſcover the miſtake. Several tenders, however, and advice-boats, eſcaped over the flats, and prevented

the Hope, with a convoy from Halifax, from adding to our loſſes and indignation.

From the time the French ſquadron firſt anchored off Shrewſbury, boats and ſmall veſſels were ſeen conſtantly paſſing to and from the ſhore, for ſupplies of water and proviſions. On the 21ſt of *July* this intercourſe was obſerved to ceaſe; and it was, in conſequence, ſuppoſed that ſome movement was in agitation. The ſucceeding day proved our conjectures to be well-founded. The wind blew freſh at north-eaſt, and by eight o'clock D'Eſtaing, with all his ſquadron, appeared under way. He kept working to windward, as if to gain a proper poſition for croſſing the bar by the time the tide ſhould ſerve. The wind could not be more favourable for ſuch a deſign; it blew from the exact point by which he could attack us to the greateſt advantage. The ſpring tides were at the higheſt, and raiſed that afternoon thirty feet on the bar. We conſequently expected the hotteſt day that had ever been fought between the two nations. On our ſide all was at ſtake. Had the men of war been defeated, the fleet of tranſports and victuallers muſt have been deſtroyed, and the army, of courſe, have fallen with us; yet, under Heaven, we had not the leaſt doubt of ſucceſs. D'Eſtaing, however, had not ſpirit equal to the riſk; at three o'clock we ſaw him bear off to the ſouthward, and in a few hours he was out of ſight.

On reading this account, the public muſt have felt ſome portion, at leaſt, of the rage and indignation that were mingled with this ſpirit of heroiſm in our brave fellows, while they reflected on their ſituation. They could not but conſider themſelves as forgotten, abandoned, marked out as ſacrifices to the daſtardly councils or treacherous deſigns of the

the firſt lord of the admiralty. If the ſailing of La Mothe Picquet had not been a ſufficient indication of the hoſtile deſigns of the French, and of their views on America, yet was it known for certain that the Toulon ſquadron had ſailed for that country in the middle of April. The accounts were communicated to adminiſtration the latter end of that month; yet the 29th of July had not brought a ſingle ſhip to reinforce our fleet, or enable us to meet the enemy. Had the French ſquadron arrived a few days ſooner, or had the evacuation of Philadelphia been deferred a few days later (and the inauſpicious appearance of the new commiſſioners had well nigh effected it) the whole force of Great Britain on that ſide the Atlantic muſt have been annihilated. D'Eſtaing would have ſurpriſed Lord Howe in the Delaware, with two ſhips of 64 guns, one of 50, two of 40, and a few frigates, encumbered with a fleet of tranſports, victuallers, and private traders, laden, for the moſt part, with the refugees from Philadelphia, their families, and the wrecks of their fortunes. All the conduct of this ſkilful commander muſt, in that criſis, have been ineffectual; all his courage could have done, or the bravery of his officers, would have been to ſell their lives at the deareſt price; and add, to the other miſeries of their country, the loſs of ſome of the moſt gallant men ſhe hath ever produced. General Clinton would have reached the ſea-ſide, in the vain expectation of meeting his tranſports. His army fatigued; the whole rebel force in his rear; no proviſions, no proſpect of procuring them; no poſſibility of a retreat; an enemy's ſquadron perhaps riding in triumph, where he expected to find a faithful aſſociate, in whoſe diſintereſted zeal he had learned to place the moſt boundleſs confidence, and the

ſureſt hopes of a retreat, after he had acted his own part. Such would have been the inevitable ſituation of this *ſaving phyſician*; he would have met, as the rebels prognoſticated to him, the *fate* of Burgoyne, without meriting his *diſgrace*.

At the ſame time, we heard it was boaſted at home, that the nation had forty ſail of the line ready to put to ſea on the moſt ſudden emergency. From the immenſe ſums that had been granted for the navy ſupplies, and the length of time adminiſtration had had to guard againſt the deſigns of our natural, and at all times perfidious, enemy, the boaſt gained credit; but our aſtoniſhment and indignation were only the more encreaſed. Could the firſt lord of the admiralty talk the nation into a belief that all this force was requiſite for our home defence, while, with the ſame breath, he repreſented the French navy ſo much inferior to the Britiſh? Could he make them believe, that, from forty ſail of the line, perfectly equipped, not the ſmalleſt reinforcement could be detached, at the only time when ſuch a ſtep could prove eſſentially ſerviceable, to the relief of thirty thouſand Britiſh ſubjects, and a reſpectable part of the navy, expoſed to almoſt certain ruin? Succours were indeed promiſed; but almoſt three months had elapſed, and we ſtill looked for them in vain. Boiling with indignation and the thirſt of revenge, in vain we caſt our eyes each hour towards the ſea, in the anxious hope of ſeeing the Britiſh colours advancing to our relief. Little did we imagine that they were kept idly waving in the harbour of Portſmouth, for the entertainment of fops and *holiday dames!*—Providence alone interfered in our deliverance; nor can we deſire a more encouraging proof that Heaven has not yet utterly abandoned this nation, than theſe tranſactions exhibit.

hibit. The French fleet had a tedious paſſage. After arriving on the coaſt, they remained forty-eight hours at anchor in the Delaware. Lord Howe (for this depended on his own vigilance and activity) had the earlieſt intelligence of their approach; was inſtantly informed of all their movements. He had time to place the fleet of tranſports in ſafety; to ſee the army equally ſecure; to concentre his forces, and form ſuch diſpoſitions, as, in the end, effectually diſappointed the ſanguine hopes of the rebels, and their faithleſs allies, and defeated the chief object of this boaſted, and admirably concerted expedition. We experienced, no doubt, the worſt of inſults and mortifications. A Britiſh fleet blocked up by a ſquadron of Frenchmen! and in our own harbour! Veſſels, bearing Engliſh colours, daily captured in our ſight! To have gone out to their aſſiſtance, even had it been practicable, would have been the extreme of madneſs, ſince to have been able to defend ourſelves where we lay, would, in the opinion of the moſt gallant officers in the fleet, have been the utmoſt that human valour could accompliſh. Yet a gentleman, who at the time obtruded himſelf into the ſociety of thoſe officers, who, in their company, was the loudeſt in bewailing our deplorable ſituation, and the deſperate card Lord Howe was forced to play---whoſe invectives againſt the firſt Lord of the Admiraly, as evidently deſigning, by a delay of ſucours, to deſtroy or diſgrace the Vice Admiral, were the moſt pointed and virulent. This gentleman now heſitates not to aſſert, that Lord Howe enjoyed a ſuperiority over the French Commander, and ſhould be accountable to the public for not having availed himſelf of this ſuperiority. I write not from the information of the ſhameleſs Editor

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of the Morning Poſt. That he hath hazarded this aſſertion to men in power, I know from the moſt reſpectable authority. Yet this man was once a ſea officer! The liſts of both fleets lie before the public; let them anſwer this no leſs upright commiſſioner than experienced captain.

Nor can Gov. Jonhſtone be offended if his aſſertions on this ſubject be eſteemed, by the writer of this narrative, ſo raſh and ignorant as to deſerve no other refutation than what muſt occur to the meaneſt capacity—to thoſe who are the leaſt converſant in navy matters. The ſame liſts ſhall ſtand in oppoſition even to higher authority; to the authority of the great Lord who ſo *worthily* preſides over the navy department. For he too, from his place in parliament, when called upon officially to quiet the fears of the people, bluſhed not to have recourſe to miſinformation and falſehood---Dared to impoſe upon the nation in a point wherein her moſt eſſential and deareſt intereſts were at ſtake, and ſolemnly declared the Britiſh Vice Admiral in America, to be at the head of a fleet equal to his defence againſt all the attempts of the Toulon ſquadron, independent of any ſucours from home. His heart, at the time, gave him the lie. He well knew that had the Britiſh Vice Admiral in America been able, *in conſequence of the advice received in May*, to collect his fleet, ſcattered from Halifax to the Gulf of Florida, for the purpoſe of diſtreſſing the rebel trade, yet he could only have had the Raiſonable of 64, the Centurion of 50, and the Rainbow of 44 guns in addition to his force at New York, when D'Eſtaing, *who had ſailed in April*, ſhould firſt arrive on the coaſt. But perhaps I wrong the noble Lord; he perhaps meant honeſtly. As a landſman he might have

have ſuppoſed, that the equality or inequality of fleets conſiſted only in the comparative number of ſhips, however diſproportioned they might be in number of guns, weight of metal, or reſpective complements of men. As a landſman, his Lordſhip might not have known, that in the ſummer ſeaſon, from the prevalency of the ſouth-weſt winds, the voyage from Halifax to New York, is nearly as precarious as it can be from Portſmouth; or that, as Halifax is the only harbour where the large men of war could repair whatever eſſential damages they might have ſuſtained in their winter and ſpring cruizes, it was more than probable ſome of them ſhould be then confined at that port. The candid public will, no doubt, admit this fair and ſatisfactory apology. The virtuous and untainted character his Lordſhip enjoys in private life, muſt remove every ſuſpicion of treachery in his official conduct. A man ſo good, a patriot ſo incorruptible, could never hazard the glory and ſafety of his country, and the blood of her citizens, from a ſelfiſh pique; in the narrow view of diſgracing a man, whoſe fame he is ſaid to envy, whoſe character and principles may hold him in awe. Ignorance in the buſineſs of his department, is his Lordſhip's misfortune, not his fault; and it would be unfair to aſſign any other cauſe why he ſhould retain our fleet in port for the parade of a naval review, at a time, when from every information the Miniſtry had received, the fate of England might have been decided in America, and thouſands of Britiſh ſubjects or butchered, or reduced to thraldom.——But more of this hereafter.

The French ſquadron continuing to ſtand to ſea on the afternoon of the 22d of July, inſtructions were ſent to the advice boats, that were ſtationed on the

Flats without the Bar, to follow and obſerve their motions. From the unanimous report of the people of the country, who eſcaped to us from the Jerſey ſhore, as well as from D'Eſtaing's movements, previous to that afternoon, it was gathered that the enemy's deſign was to force the port of New-York. It was not unreaſonable therefore to ſuppoſe, that their bearing away to the ſouthward, was owing to the appearance of an eaſterly gale, which, as it ſhould blow directly on the coaſt, muſt have rendered their former ſituation extremely dangerous, and that their return might ſpeedily be expected. Advice however was received, that they were ſeen on the morning of the 23d, about thirty leagues from the land, in the latitude of the Delaware, ſteering by the wind, which was then at eaſt, on the larboard tack. The Delaware frigate was ordered on the look out, and we, at the ſame time, received an unexpected acceſſion of force by the arrival of the Renown from the Weſt Indies. [*July* 26.] Even a ſingle fifty-gun ſhip was then of ſuch infinite conſequence to us, that it was matter of exultation in the fleet to learn that ſhe had paſſed unnoticed through the rear of the French, in the duſk of the preceding evening.

The ſame day the Diſpatch returned from Halifax. As the Admiralty had given Lord Howe to underſtand, that Byron's ſquadron was deſtined for that port (why they ſhould have been deſtined for that port, was not within the powers of common ſenſe to gueſs) his Lordſhip had ordered this ſloop thither on the firſt certain knowledge he had that the French fleet were advanced to the Delaware. Her diſpatches brought no mention of Byron; but they made ſome amends, by informing the Admiral, that the Raiſonable and Centurion were on their way to New York, and in two or three days they both

both joined us in ſafety. The Raiſonable ſo narrowly eſcaped the French fleet, that ſhe ſaw them the evening of the 27th, ſteering for Rhode Iſland. Had thoſe ſhips appeared a few days ſooner, either they muſt have been prevented from forming a junction with our ſquadron, and forced again to ſea, or we ſhould have had the mortification to ſee them increaſe the triumph of our enemy.

The ſame would alſo have been the fate of the Cornwal, a 74 gun ſhip of Byron's ſquadron, that croſſed the Bar on the 30th. With indignation it was known by her report, that the reinforcement had not ſailed from Plymouth before the ninth of June, that even then they were kept beating thro' the Channel for three days in a thick fog, without having received their final orders, ſo that had they been then ſeparated, not a captain in the ſquadorn would have known his deſtination; that the Cornwal had parted from them the 3d of July in a gale of wind, and that from the miſerable condition in which they had at firſt put to ſea, from the ſtate of their maſts and rigging, and the diſeaſes amongſt their crews, there was more reaſon to tremble for their ſafety, than to look for their arrival.

The fortunate junction of ſo many detached ſhips and their arriving at ſo happy a moment, counterbalanced, in ſome degree, this alarming intelligence. It was now known for certain that the French fleet had ſailed for Rhode Iſland; and whatever little proſpect of ſucceſs, our force, even after the late addition, could open to us, yet the poſt was of ſuch importance, and the fate of ſo large a portion of the Britiſh army as formed the garriſon, of ſuch infinite conſequence to the general cauſe, that it was imagined the Admiral would not loſe a moment in making ſome attempt for their relief. The

accounts received by his lordſhip, ſubſequent to the report of the Raiſonable, as appears from the public letters, favoured ſuch an attempt. Theſe accounts intimated, that on the morning of the 29th, the French fleet had appeared off Newport harbour. That two of their frigates had entered the Seconnet paſſage the ſame day. That the next morning two line of battle ſhips had run up the Naraganſet paſſage, and anchored off the north end of Conanicut, and that the remainder of the ſquadron were at anchor without Brenton's Ledge, about five miles from the town. In this divided ſituation ſome opportunity might offer, of which advantage could be taken, for the relief of the garriſon, and the preparations for ſea were haſtened with this view. The 23d regiment, under the command of Lieut. Col. Balfour, came down volunteers to ſerve on board the fleet, relieving the grenadiers and light infantry, whom Sir H. Clinton had withdrawn to be reimbodied. Two additional fire-ſhips, conſtructed by the Vice Admiral's orders, joined him at the ſame time, and all things were in readineſs for ſea by the 28th of Auguſt. But the ſignal to weigh had ſcarce been made, when the wind veered round to the ſouthward, and not returning fair, ſo as to correſpond with the time of high-water on the bar, till the morning of the 6th, we could not make Rhode Iſland before the evening of the 9th, when we anchored between point Judith and the light-houſe. From the report of the frigates ſent on a-head, the French fleet were at anchor within the harbour. By this means the communication with Brenton's Neck was open, and the Vice Admiral had an opportunity of receiving immediate intelligence both from Sir R. Pigot and Captain Briſbane. They informed him that D'Eſtaing, after having

having remained at anchor off Brenton's Ledge from the 29th of July; had the afternoon before we arrived entered the harbour under an eaſy ſail, cannonading the town and batteries as he paſſed, and receiving their fire without any material effect on either ſide, and anchored above the town, between Goat Iſland and Conanicut. That the two line of battle ſhips ſtill kept their ſtations in the Naraganſet, and the frigates in the Seconnet. That the Wedneſday before we appeared, it had been found neceſſary to deſtroy the Orpheus, Lark, Juno, and Cerberus frigates; that ſeveral merchantmen had been ſunk in the Channel, to prevent the enemy from approaching near enough to attack the batteries to advantage, and that on D'Eſtaing's entering the harbour, the Flora and Falcon had alſo been ſunk; that the men belonging to the ſeveral ſhips were all on ſhore, and encamped by themſelves, to be diſpoſed of at the General's pleaſure.

From Sir R. Pigot, he learned that the rebel army, with which the Toulon ſquadron was to co-operate, was aſſembled on the Connecticut ſhore, all round the iſland. Small parties of them had taken poſſeſſion of Conanicut, from whence he had previouſly withdrawn his troops, as he had alſo from all the out-poſts on the northern extremity of Rhode Iſland. Craft of all kinds were ready to tranſport the enemy to whatever part they ſhould mark out for the deſcent. Sir Robert had cauſed ſeveral additional works to be thrown up on the heights adjacent to Newport, to which he meant to confine his defence, and was himſelf, with his chief ſtrength, poſted on Tommeney Hill, a very high eminence that commands the principal approaches to the town.

Various were the conjectures throughout the fleet, with regard to the probable reſolutions which

the Vice Admiral might form in conſequence of thoſe advices. The French, with all their former ſuperiority of force, now enjoyed a poſition infinitely ſtronger than that on which we depended at Sandy Hook. The rebels were poſſeſſed of the left-hand ſhore, the whole length of the harbour. They conſequently could not only annoy us on our entrance and approach from the craggy heights of Conanicut, cloſe to which we muſt have paſt, but in the courſe of an attack againſt D'Eſtaing, as he then lay, bring whatever number of guns they choſe to bear upon us from the northern extremity of that iſland. The moſt ſkilful officers were therefore of opinion, that the Vice Admiral could not riſque an attack; and it appears by his lordſhip's public letter, that this was alſo his own opinion: "under ſuch circumſtances he judged it was impracticable to afford the General any eſſential relief."

The next morning totally altered the ſcene. The wind had changed to the north-eaſt, and blew directly out of the harbour. About eight o'clock a heavy cannonade was heard towards the town, and in a ſhort time the French ſquadron appeared ſtanding out to ſea with all their ſail abroad. Ten ſail formed a line of battle a-head, advancing through the Middle Channel, and were joined without the light-houſe by the two ſhips from the Naraganſet. Lord Howe immediately made the ſignal to get under way, and the Britiſh fleet ſtood to ſea. By this movement it was evident his lordſhip had two objects in view. To get time and ſpace to form his diſpoſition to his wiſhes, and either to profit by the ſea breeze, ſhould it ſet in, as from every appearance it was conjectured it would, or by manœuvring to gain the weather gage from the enemy. This was an object of the greateſt importance.

Should

Should his lordſhip await the French Admiral, and attack him to leeward, the fireſhips, in which were placed the greateſt hopes of ſucceſs againſt a force ſo ſuperior, not only could not have been brought into action, but would have alſo obliged the large frigates, which had them in charge, to remain inactive. The whole of that day was therefore employed in endeavouring by ſeveral maſterly manœuvres to throw the enemy to leeward. But they appeared to be equally attentive to the ſame object; and diſcovered as great ſolicitude to preſerve their advantages as the Engliſh Admiral was to wreſt it from them.

Night came on. The Apollo was ordered to ſtand between the two fleets, within view of our lights, and by private ſignals to intimate the enemy's ſituation, as long as ſhe could keep them in ſight. By theſe means we found ourſelves at the dawn of the next day, in the ſame relative poſition, though at ſomewhat a greater diſtance, than the preceding evening. The wind ſtill hung to the eaſtward, blowing freſh. The weather was extremely thick and hazy; no proſpect of a change appeared. The Vice Admiral therefore ordered the frigates which had the charge of the fireſhips to be informed, that ſhould the enemy continue to preſerve the weather gage, he ſhould await their approach with the ſquadron formed in a line of battle a-head from the wind to the ſtarboard. At the ſame time the fleet beheld him, with infinite ſatisfaction, take a deciſive ſtep that ſtrongly marks his character, and ſhews him to be above the little fears and apprehenſions of thoſe, who, to avoid the whiſpers of the ignorant, act againſt their own judgment. It has ever been acknowledged, that any ſtation in the line is the moſt improper a commander in chief can chooſe in

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the time of action. As ſoon as the ſhip, in which he is embarked, engages, his abilities can be of no more conſequence or ſervice than thoſe of any other captain in his fleet. But to break through eſtabliſhed cuſtoms, and be the firſt to try the experiment, where malice might throw a ſneer at his perſonal bravery, required a man who poſſeſſed other qualities of mind than are merely requiſite to form the ſeaman. Lord Howe was convinced of the utility of the meaſure, and this alone determined him to purſue it. In his ſituation indeed the expediency was particularly obvious. Engaged with ſuch unequal force, the chief hope of ſucceſs was placed in the ſkill and abilities of the commander in chief, in his taking advantage of every fortuitous occurence, and drawing every ſcruple of his little force into its proper point. He therefore ſhifted his flag on board the Apollo frigate, leaving the Eagle in the centre, and moved to a convenient diſtance to take a view of the whole line. As he gained by this a nearer obſervation of the French fleet, his lordſhip, perceiving, as we ſuppoſed, that D'Eſtaing had placed his largeſt ſhips in his van, thought proper to ſtrengthen the rear of the Britiſh to receive their attack, and made a ſignal for the Cornwal to move from the centre and change ſtations with the Centurion. About four o'clock the French Admiral altered his bearing, and new formed his line to engage to leeward. Lord Howe croſſed through the interſtices of our line with the frigates and fire veſſels, and in a few minutes after made a ſignal for the ſhips to ſhorten ſail, and cloſe to the centre. In this movement he was obeyed to the admiration of the oldeſt officer, as indeed he had been in the ſeveral manœuvres he had put in practice either to gain the wind, or preparatory to the intended attack.

attack. We now expected every inſtant to hear our rear engaged with the French van; but in a a ſhore time they again altered their courſe, and bearing away to the ſouthward, were ſoon, from the ſtate of the weather, entirely out of ſight.

The wind at this time blew ſo freſh, that our ſhips were under cloſe reefed top-ſails; and the ſea ran ſo high, that Lord Howe would not venture on board his own ſhip. He therefore made the ſignal from the Apollo, that he meant to lie to, for the night on the ſtarboard tack, to prevent ſeparation. Yet ſo dark and hazy was the weather, and to ſuch violence did the gale increaſe, that in the morning the blue diviſion was totally divided from the fleet. The centre and van, with moſt of the frigates and fireſhips, ſtill kept together. At noon the ſquadron was alarmed by a ſignal of diſtreſs from the Apollo, and in a few minutes after her main-topmaſt was ſeen to go overboard. The ſhip, in which the writer of this narrative ſerved, kept ſight of the flag until eleven o'clock that night, from which time till the 17th in the evening, the greater part of the fleet were ignorant of his lordſhip's ſituation, and under the greateſt anxiety for his fate. It afterwards was known to us, that the Apollo having loſt her foremaſt alſo on the night of the 12th, he had been toſt about till the next day, when, as the gale moderated, he was taken up by Captain Hammond, and carried on board the Phœnix, then in company with the Centurion, Ardent, Richmond, Vigilant and Roebuck. On the 15th he diſcovered the French fleet partly at anchor about 25 leagues to the eaſtward of Cape May, and after having viewed their poſition, and left the Centurion to direct the diſperſed ſhips of his own ſquadron, or ſuch of Vice Admiral Byron's as might arrive to

follow him, he directed his courſe for the rendezvous at the Hook. Here he found the reſt of the fleet, which had alſo been much diſperſed. The Roebuck appeared without her mizen-topmaſt. The Raiſonable brought in her bowſprit, the Cornwal her mainmaſt, ſprung. The fireſhips were ſo much damaged by the wet, as to be, for ſometime, totally unfit for ſervice. Beſides thoſe damages cauſed by the ſtorm, the Iſis returned much ſhattered and diſabled, from a gallant action ſhe had ſuſtained for an hour and an half with a French ſeventy-four.

The French fleet were much more ſeverely handled. On the evening of the 13th towards duſk, Captain Dawſon, in the Renown of fifty guns, fell in with the Languedoc, carrying Monſieur D'Eſtaing, totally diſmaſted. He ran down cloſe under her lee, and being there haled, and ordered to ſhew his colours, gave her all his upper-deck guns. He then ſtood off to windward, and opening his lower ports, wore round under her ſtern, and at half a cable's length, poured in three broadſides. Among other damages, he ſhot away her rudder. It then was ſo dark, and blew ſo freſh, that Dawſon reſolved to lie to for the night, in the reſolution of renewing his attack the next morning. But at the firſt dawn, ſix French ſhips hove in ſight, three of which gave him chace, and three remained with the wreck.

The ſame evening, and about the ſame hour, Commodore Hotham, in the Preſton of 50 guns, alſo croſſed the Tonnant, their 80 gun ſhip, with only her mainmaſt ſtanding. He engaged her with the greateſt advantage till night forced him to draw off, in the ſame deſign that Dawſon had formed, and with the ſame certainty of ſucceſs. But he was diſ-

diſappointed by a ſimilar unfortunate intervention of part of the French ſquadron.

A third action, as brilliant as any on record in the hiſtory of the Engliſh navy, was fought the ſame day between the Iſis of 50 guns, commanded by Captain John Raynor, and the Cæſar of 74, with a flag at her mizen-maſt, in complete order. Raynor, returning to the rendezvous, firſt diſcovered her force about three in the afternoon, and endeavoured to eſcape her; but ſhe proved the faſter ſailor. In a ſhort time they were cloſe on board each other, and engaged for an hour and half within piſtol ſhot. The ſkill and addreſs of the Britiſh Captain, his intrepidity and reſolution during ſo unequal a conteſt, ſeconded by the ardour and bravery of his men and officers, who all placed the utmoſt confidence in his abilities, at length forced the Frenchman to put before the wind, and fly with all her ſails. The Iſis was incapable of purſuing him, having ſuffered greatly in her maſts and rigging, at which the enemy pointed all his guns. Raynor directed his to better purpoſe. Bougainville loſt his arm, the firſt lieutenant his leg, and they acknowledged ſeventy men killed and wounded.* The modeſty and reſerve that ſtrike us in Raynor's public account of this glorious action, add new luſtre to his gallantry; recommend him the more forcibly to the public, and are characteriſtic of the true hero. The Duke of Ancaſter, though arrived from England only the day before we ſailed, obtained leave to ſerve on board the Iſis, and was greatly diſtinguiſhed during the action.

On the fleets being reaſſembled, the attention of the Vice Admiral was inſtantly directed to the

* In the Iſis 14 were wounded, and one man of the 25d killed in the tops.

ſpeedy repair of the diſabled ſhips. The Iſis, with the Apollo and fireſhips, were ſent up to New York, and ſuch ſtores ordered down as were requiſite for the ſupply of the ſhips that could be repaired at the Hook. The Experiment was diſpatched [*June* 18.] to explore the ſtate of affairs at Newport, and the condition of the garriſon, and the Ariel and Galatea ſent to cruize, the one to the ſouthward; the other to the northward. The ſame day the Monmouth, one of Byron's ill-fated ſquadron, with her main-maſt ſprung, and her men waſted with diſeaſe, joined the fleet.

The eſſential repairs requiſite for ſo many ſhips, unavoidably employed ſeveral days, during which the Vice Admiral received information that the French ſquadron had returned to Rhode Iſland. The Experiment [23d.] had been chaſed into the Sound by three of their large ſhips, and had returned to New York through Hellgate; the firſt two-decker that had ever attempted that dangerous paſſage. The Venus and Galatea confirmed the accounts. The latter had ſeen eleven ſail of the line, including the two diſmaſted ſhips, at anchor off the harbour of Newport, on the evening of the 20th, and left them in the ſame ſituation the following day.

The morning after Lord Howe had received this intelligence, and while he was waiting for the tide to begin croſſing the Bar, the diſabled ſhips, except the Iſis and the Apollo, being then nearly compleated, Lieut. Stanley arrived from Rhode Iſland, from whence he made his eſcape in a whale-boat, the Friday before, at the utmoſt riſque of his life. His information was, that he had left the French fleet at anchor off the harbour's mouth; that, as the wind had ſince then continued at eaſt, it

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was not probable they could be got in; that the rebels, in number more than twenty thouſand, were advanced within fifteen hundred yards of our works; that Sir R. Pigot was under no apprehenſions from any of their attempts in front; but that ſhould the French fleet come in, he ordered him to ſay, it would make an alarming change. Troops might be landed at Brenton's Neck, according to the original plan agreed upon between the rebels and the French, and advance upon his rear, and in that caſe he could not anſwer for the conſequences.

On this information Lord Howe immediately croſſed the Bar, and being joined in the night by the Experiment and fireſhips from New York, and a number of volunteers for the Monmouth, ſailed the next morning for Newport. A reinforcement from Clinton's army was at the ſame time to be ſent through the Sound, for the relief of the garriſon. Lord Howe was to favour their approach by drawing off the French fleet, and endeavouring to bring them to action; but being met at ſea by the Galatea with diſpatches from General Pigot, by which it appeared that D'Eſtaing had, on the night, between the Friday and Saturday, ſailed from his anchorage off point Judith, and ſteered in a courſe for Boſton, he detatched the Nautilus, Sphynx and Vigilant to Rhode Iſland, and ſtood on with his ſquadron in queſt of the enemy. As it was not probable that they would attempt to navigate their large ſhips in their diſabled ſtate through the South Channel, within George's Bank, the Vice Admiral was in hopes, that by following that courſe, he might intercept them in their approach to Boſton Bay. Theſe hopes were confirmed by the Captain of the privateer-brig Reſiſtance, taken by our fleet on the 28th. He had been ſent from Boſton the preceding Monday, to look out for the

French

French ſquadron, and pilot them into Boſton. But as he had ſailed down the channel, and ſeen nothing of them, he ſuppoſed they had ſteered round the Bank.

The morning of the 30th brought us into Boſton Bay. The fleet continued under ſail, while the Phœnix and Experiment were ſent forward to look into the harbour, and by private ſignals to intimate to the Admiral, whether the French ſquadron were arrived or not, or if arrived, where anchored. Between four and five we had the mortification to learn, by a ſignal from the Experiment, that they were lying in Nantaſket Road.

The next day the Vice Admiral, meaning to take advantage of a leading wind to view their poſition, was prevented by the St. Alban's running on ſhore near the point of Cape Cod. He effected his purpoſe, however, on the 1ſt of September, when finding them ſo ſtrongly poſted, under cover of the ſtrong works conſtructed on the iſlands which command the Nantaſket road and channel, that no attempt could be made upon them with the leaſt proſpect of ſucceſs, he loſt not a moment in returning to the aſſiſtance of Newport. But he had already effectually relieved that important garriſon; Sullivan on the retreat of his allies, and the account of the Britiſh fleet being ſailed in purſuit of them, thought proper to retire from before the place, charging his ill ſucceſs to the failure of promiſe on the part of D'Eſtaing.

Thus, by a happy mixture of prudent and bold meaſures, by a ſeries of manœuvres, which the naval tactick was ſcarcely thought capable of exhibiting; by an indefatigable zeal, and an ardent attention to take advantage of every occurrence; by the unconquerable and perſevering ſpirit with which

his example inſpired every officer and ſeaman under his command, Lord Howe, having, with forces ſo unequal, defeated all the great deſigns of the enemy, protected the army and the fleet of tranſports at New-York, raiſed the ſiege at Rhode-Iſland, and driven the French ſquadron into the port of Boſton, whence their ſhattered condition would not ſuffer them to venture for a length of time, returned to New-York, and to the infinite regret both of navy and army, reſigned the command into the hands of Rear Admiral Gambier.*

From this impartial detail of facts, the public ſhall judge between the infamous hints and aſperſions thrown out by the abettors of a Sandwich and the conduct of Lord Howe. They will judge how much the nation is indebted to that good man and brave officer, whoſe character they have heard ſo inſiduouſly undermined. They will bluſh at the cruel and unjuſt treatment with which his ſervices are repaid, and will turn their indignation againſt the tools of a vicious man, who by ignorance and treachery, had well nigh ſacrificed—I will not ſay the Britiſh empire in America---that phantom is

* The ſending out ſuch a ſucceſſor to Lord Howe, at ſo critical a juncture, was the bittereſt of the many inſults paſſed by the firſt Lord of the Admiralty on the navy officers ſerving in America. Gambier ſucceeding to a command which required the abilities of a Howe, and being placed at the head of the gallant men who were formed under that great commander, was as degrading to them, as it might have been fatal to the nation. Let it not be anſwered, as I remember the great Lord once urged in his own defence, on an occaſion ſomewhat ſimilar, that it was never deſigned he ſhould ſerve as commander in chief, and that Byron was on the coaſt. I ſpeak of a meaſure adopted previous to the fortuitous departure of Mr. Byron for America, and the man had too much vanity to conceal the unexpected honour that was intended him from his firſt arrival.

vaniſhed---but the lives of thirty thouſand brave fellows who had ſo long fought and bled for their country.

Theſe brave fellows have indeed themſelves borne ample teſtimony to the Character of Lord Howe. However unjuſt the claſh of intereſts or views of ambition have rendered ſome individuals in the army in other inſtances, in ſpeaking of this brother they have but one voice; and from the general to the common men, all hung down their dejected heads, when they ſaw the preſerver of the Britiſh name in America ſail from the coaſt. No ſhameleſs hireling could there miſrepreſent facts of which they had themſelves been witneſſes, nor gloſs over, by falſe and deluſive accounts, the neglect or treachery, no matter to them whether treachery or neglect, of the timid and dilatory meaſures purſued in the management of the navy at home, from the fatal effects of which his Lordſhip effectually reſcued them. They owned themſelves indebted to him for their ſafety and preſervation, and with the ſame breath paid him their juſt tribute of praiſe for the ſignal triumph they ſaw him obtain over the enemies of their country. I repeat the words----- the ſignal triumph they ſaw him obtain over the enemies of their country. If the plain narrative I have given to my readers, has not warranted me in their opinion to uſe ſuch expreſſions, I am confident that a few reflections will make the public adopt the ſame language.

For this purpoſe it will be requiſite to obſerve to them, that Congreſs were much better informed of the real ſtate of our navy in America, at the beginning of this year, than the Lord at the head of the Admiralty acknowledged himſelf to have been. Its numbers and ſituation they repreſented to their

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new allies much more accurately than it ſuited his lordſhip's views and purpoſes to own to the Engliſh nation. They knew that the chief object of our armaments in the American ſeas, was the interruption of their trade, and the deſtruction of the ſmall veſſels they had been able to fit out. That for this ſervice five ſail of ſixty-four gun ſhips, five fifties, with a certain number of frigates and ſloops, were deemed amply ſufficient, and were alone employed. That even this ſmall force was conſtantly diſperſed along the whole extent of the coaſt, as it muſt have been to anſwer its intent. That therefore an armament in force, planned with ſecreſy, and conducted with vigour and expedition, might warrant hopes of the moſt brilliant and deciſive ſucceſs. They might attack the Britiſh ſhips in detail, and defeat them piece-meal. The men of war being once deſtroyed, the tranſports and victuallers muſt fall of courſe. Cut off from every ſupply of proviſion, every means of retreat, the whole Britiſh army muſt fall an eaſy prey. The conteſt muſt be decided by a ſingle blow, before the deſign could be ſuſpected at home, or at leaſt before any ſuccours could be ſent out to prevent the execution. Such were the juſt and well-grounded repreſentations urged by the American agents to the French miniſtry; and D'Eſtaing's expedition was planned in conſequence. A force, equal to the deſign, was in immediate readineſs. Such ſecreſy was obſerved, with regard to its deſtination, that the fleet had reached the longitude of the weſtern iſlands, before the French Admiral, by a formal declaration of war, on board the ſeveral ſhips of his ſquadron, opened the ſecret to his officers, and animated his men, by the proſpect of the certain and eaſy conqueſt he ſet before them.

While our enemies were thus employed in vigorouſly puſhing forward to the execution of the ſchemes they had ſo wiſely planned for our deſtruction, the firſt Lord of the Admiralty thought his buſineſs done, if he could ſucceed in deceiving the nation. The friends of the conſtitution, and they who had the glory of their country at heart, were the only enemies he ſeemed to dread. Provided he could repel their attacks on his diſgraceful adminiſtration, he was willing to truſt the national ſafety and honour to chance. Hackneyed in the arts of deceit and miſpreſentation, and encouraged by the ſlaviſh obſequiouſneſs of a large majority of the conſtitutional guardians of our liberty, he made the groſſeſt appeal to the credulity of the people, whoſe indignation he yet dreaded. With this view they were daily amuſed with pompous accounts of the flouriſhing ſtate of our naval armaments; of the number of ſhips, ready manned and fitted, that *could be ſent out* when occaſion required. The preparations of the French were repreſented as trifling and inſignificant, and aſſurances given that on our ſide the utmoſt care was taken to riſe occaſionally beyond them, and ſtill to maintain our uſual ſuperiority. Majeſty itſelf was brought forward to favour the deceit, after having been firſt deceived, and every meretricious artifice of pomp and ſhew put in practice to cover our weakneſs. Under the hands of our ſtate quacks, the nation aſſumed the falſe and tranſient fluſh of a conſumptive patient, while ſhe languiſhed interiorly, and her whole frame was menaced with ſpeedy diſſolution. In vain did her friends repreſent her real ſituation, ſolicit, threaten, attempt every expedient to reſcue her from the unſkilful hands that had firſt deſtroyed her conſtitution, and would now flatter her to her ruin.

ruiu. In vain Lord Chatham uttered his inſpiration in the houſe of peers, and with that voice which had ſo often ſpoke ſafety and confidence to the nation, call upon the ſervants of the King, to embrace the vigorous, preventive meaſures, which under his own auſpicious adminiſtration, had crowned our arms with glory and conqueſt. The hardeſt bodies ſparkle by colliſion; but in the cold hearts of our daſtardly Miniſters, not a ſpark could this great man kindle of the divine flame that conſumed himſelf. The effects of his diſappointment are too deeply engraved in the heart of every true Engliſhman to be forgotten. He found he had ſurvived the Britiſh ſpirit, and gladly ſunk under this laſt and glorious exertion of his powers to revive it. Death, happily for himſelf, however fatally to his country, reſcued him from the miſery and diſgrace, of which his laſt breath, like that of dying good men of old, was, I fear, prohetic.

Peace to his aſhes! The mention of his name has deluded me from my ſubject. I meant to obſerve, that the moſt accurate and authentic accounts daily received of the forward preparations in the French ports; the ſailing of the ſquadron under La Mothe Piquet, and the object of its equipment, known beyond a doubt; the very declaration of war, for as ſuch every man of common ſenſe conſidered, from the firſt, the reſcript delivered with ſuch inſolence by the French Ambaſſador in the name of his maſter; the exultation and triumph of the American agents, who, notwithſtanding their native ſagacity and cunning, could not conceal their joy at the full ſucceſs of their negociations with the cabinet of Verſailles; the arrival of one of theſe agents at Toulon, and the preparations made for his reccption, and the reception of

Mr. Girard, on board the Languedoc, the ſtale ſubject of every public converſation; the large quantities of merchandize for the American markets, with which our Miniſters were well informed the fleet at Toulon was loaded; the fulneſs of all theſe concurring circumſtances, ſo clearly expreſſive of the deſigns of the French, was ſlighted and diſregarded. At leaſt what precautions were taken in conſequence, but ſuch as are to be found in the fine plauſible ſpeeches of the Miniſtry in both houſes, or as were confined to the idle, ineffectual viſits of the firſt Lord of the Admiralty, to the ſeveral dock-yards? Was not the important paſs of the Mediterranean ſtill left open and defenceleſs? Was a ſingle ſhip ſent to reinforce our commander there, or to put him in a condition even to obſerve the enemy, and inform Miniſtry of their motions? Were not the firſt accounts of the departure of the Toulon ſquadron, and the courſe they held, communicated to one of our reſidents by a foreign power, and by him tranſmitted home by land?

In the latter end of April, when this important intelligence was authenticated beyond a doubt, what part did our great and deciſive Miniſters take? They fought their battles with oppoſition, but ſuffered the enemy to proceed in triumph. The firſt was their great object. To ſucceed in it, they did not bluſh to magnify to their Sovereign and to the people, the preparations, which the day before, they affected to deſpiſe. The French fleet at Breſt, was then declared to be in ſuch force, that not a ſhip could be ſpared from our home defence.* The deſtination of the Toulon ſquadron was not *certainly* known---their ſailing in the direction they

* See Lord North's ſpeech.

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held might be a feint---if a ſquadron ſhould be detached from our fleet in purſuit of them, they *might perhaps*, return to form a junction with D'Orviliers, and give a deciſive ſuperiority over Admiral Keppel---though ſeen at a ſhort diſtance from the weſtern iſlands, yet they might have proceeded ſo far only to cover their deſign the more effectually------like Bayes's army, they might remain concealed, hanging in the clouds, we may ſuppoſe, till the intelligence of ſuch a detachment having ſailed from our fleet ſhould reach them---they might then have tacked about, and, joined with the armament at Breſt, pour ſuch a reſiſtleſs force on our coaſt, as muſt have ſwept all before it.

To what an abject ſtate muſt the nation be reduced! How muſt her ancient ſpirit be broken, when a ſet of Miniſters dare account for their tame and daſtardly conduct by ſuch a tiſſue of abſurdities? who do not even ſcruple to profeſs, that they hold the underſtanding of our repreſentatives in ſuch utter contempt, as to think no reaſons ſo flimſy or puerile, no meaſures of ſuch deſperate tendency, but they can be certain of a majority of voices to ſupport them in both Houſes; who have not even the decency to reſpect the ſufferings they have entailed upon us, but openly and vauntingly exult in the triumph they have gained over the wiſdom and common-ſenſe of the nation! The very reaſons that ſhould for ever exclude them from all confidence and truſt, they ſhamefully urge as a certain plea to gain additional credit from the people. "We were totally ignorant of the ſtate "of our enemy, of their views or deſigns, and "were conſequently fearful of taking a deciſive "ſtep in one quarter, leſt the attack ſhould be "meant againſt us in another."——Beſides the impudence

impudence and effrontery of ſuch a confeſſion, are they not aware that this queſtion ſtill occurs—— Why had ye not placed the navy of Great-Britain in a ſtate to defy all the attempts of her enemies, in every quarter of the globe, as before the days of your inauſpicious adminiſtration it had ever been? Why was the fate of this once glorious empire made the ſport of contingencies, and abandoned to probabilites and ſenſeleſs conjecture? Had ye not time enough to prepare for the trial? or were ye fearful that the nation would have refuſed you the neceſſary ſupplies to defeat the intentions of her natural enemies, of which you had ſuch long and manifeſt warning? Did ſhe not comply with every demand however enormous or extravagant? Did not the public treaſures flow in as copious ſtreams as ye choſe to mark out, and in the channels you directed? Were you not convinced that the purſe of every individual would be open to you, if once the national wealth ſhould be applied to its proper uſe, and the navy of Britain, her only natural bulwark and defence, become an object of your attention?

The fact is, our Miniſtry had the earlieſt and fulleſt intelligence of the time the Toulon ſquadron ſailed, of its deſtination, and the inevitable danger of which our forces in America were threatened, ſhould D'Eſtaing ſucceed. But it is equally certain that, notwithſtanding the immenſe ſums that had been voted for the navy ſupplies for theſe three years paſt, the fleet was then ſo weak, ſhattered and out of repair, as not to afford a detachment adequate to the emergency. Almoſt two months were requiſite to glean the old ſtores, that had lain rotting for years, in the different dock-yards, to ſtrip the ſhips at Portſmouth of their rigging, and

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ſplice and knot cordage, that had been long condemned as unſerviceable, to patch up maſts and yards from the wrecks and remnants of a fleet, once the terror of the world; to ſweep the priſons for men, infected with diſeaſes, and unaccuſtomed to a ſea-life. When, by all theſe wretched ſhifts and contrivances, a ſquadron of thirteen ſail had been at length, we cannot ſay fitted out, but ſent to ſea, what were the conſequences? They could not ſtand againſt a ſummer gale—Scattered and diſperſed at the mercy of the winds and waves for almoſt three months, the wretched remains of Mr. Byron's fleet arrived at New-York, moſtly diſmaſted and unrigged, and their companies ſo ſickly, from the gaol infections brought by them on board, that in a ſeventy-four-gun ſhip, only eighty men were capable of doing duty. The Vice Admiral himſelf, in a diſabled ſhip, eſcaped with difficulty from the French fleet: he thought it a happineſs to gain the port of Halifax, where he found part of his ſquadron in the ſame wretched condition with the ſhip in which he was himſelf embarked. Tho' it muſt be obvious to the moſt ignorant and abject retainer of the Miniſtry, that no expectations could, from the firſt, be formed of a ſquadron thus equipped; though they have been told repeatedly, that there is not an officer, ſerving in the ſquadron, who will not declare, upon his honour, that had the ſhips been in any tolerable condition, with reſpect either to men or furniture, they would not have even felt the force of the gale, by which they were ſo miſerably ſhattered; yet have the abettors of the junto, with their uſual effrontery, caught at this happy circumſtance. They have expatiated on the ſubject with all the triumph of integrity, and a conſciouſneſs of having diſcharged

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their duty. They cannot, they ſay, contend with winds and waves---accidents may defeat the beſt deſigns---had this gale not ſeparated the fleet, it would, in the common courſe of ſailing, have gained the coaſt of America in ſufficient time to defeat all the ſchemes of the Toulon ſquadron. To the facts which I have already related, that evidently refute this aſſertion, I ſhall add one obſervation---The Cornwall was not kept back by this gale; half of the way ſhe made alone, unretarded by the diſproportionate ſailing of a ſquadron; yet ſhe arrived not at the Hook till the 30th, and D'Eſtaing had been on the coaſt from the 5th.

After all, I may be told by the miniſterial runners, that I have obtruded on the public a ſubject too trifling and inconſiderable to deſerve their attention. The fate of our navy and army in America, which appeared of ſuch conſequence to thoſe engaged in their defence on the ſpot, was far from being a principal object with our wiſe and prudent rulers. Their chief attention was employed in guarding the ſeat of the empire; and the operations in the Channel of England engroſſed all their thoughts, and dried up all their reſources. Here then, we may ſuppoſe, all is victory and triumph! Here are no diſgraces to weep over----no murmurs, diſcontent, or complaint------no cauſe of complaining. At home it would ſeem, adminiſtration are under no neceſſity of having recourſe to falſe repreſentations---of ſeeking unjuſt pretexts to injure the reputation of the moſt experienced and diſtinguiſhed officers of the navy, or to ſhift the public indignation from one of their own ſhameleſs junto, to a brave man, who preſerved the nation from ſtill greater infamy and diſgrace. The juſt and forgiving Sandwich diſcovers no jealouſy, it would

ſeem, of the gallant Admiral, who joined the prudence of a ſtateſman to the ſkill of a commander in chief, who dared to undeceive the public by his prudent conduct, and at the riſque of a temporary imputation on his own character, rather than by their deſtruction; who, on diſcovering how falſe and impudent the aſſertions of that ſhameleſs Miniſter had been, and the great ſuperiority of the Breſt fleet, returned to port, if poſſible, to gain a reinforcement, rather than riſque the exiſtence of the Britiſh nation, in a conteſt, the moſt unequal and deſperate.

Surely there is a point of tameneſs and paſſive forbearance, below which it is impoſſible that a nation ſhould fall! and either our miniſters have depreſſed us to that point, or the genius of Britain has deſerted her for ever, and her ancient ſpirit hath been ſo effectually broken and ſubjugated, as never to be rouſed again. Inſulted and threatened by every nation around us; engaged in open hoſtilities with France; on the eve of a war with Spain; Portugal, the child of our charity, deſerted to our enemies; Holland adding inſolence to ingratitude, and cavilling for pretexts to ſhare the ſpoils of her ancient defender and faithful ally; the empire itſelf diſmembered, and thoſe provinces from which we derived wealth and power and conſequence, torn from us for ever, and their inhabitants driven into the moſt relentleſs, inveterate enmity; the great ſources of our treaſure perhaps at this inſtant cut off, and thouſands of the people reduced to beggary, by the loſs of our Weſt-India iſlands. Such is the proſpect from abroad. At home, we are divided in our counſels: the betrayers of their country, who, in the courſe of a few years, have tumbled the nation from the height of

glory, wealth, and power to which ſhe had been raiſed in the laſt reign, and overwhelmed her in diſgrace, beggary, and ruin, ſtill triumph in their deſigns; are employed, cheriſhed, ſupported in their obſtinate adherence to the ſame meaſures, which experience has proved to be pregnant with ruin and deſtruction; while the friends of the conſtitution, who have uniformly oppoſed thoſe fatal meaſures, are ſlighted, ſet aſide, and branded with the opprobrious imputation of faction, and diſappointed party malevolence: officers are pitted againſt officers in private broils, and the utmoſt pains taken by the Miniſters to foment their jealouſies, and add fuel to their animoſities; ſome among themſelves, who had once gained the eſteem and confidence of their corps, whoſe abilities were rated high, and whoſe character was reſpected, have not been aſhamed to proſtitute their name to this vile buſineſs, and, for the ſmiles of a wicked great man, to ſell themſelves to endleſs contempt and ſcorn. The moſt gallant of our commanders, in both lines of ſervice, who had long flouriſhed in the opinion and favour of their king and country, we ſee inſulted, injured, their reputation whiſpered away, and loaded with the diſgrace and infamy which legions of angels could not have prevented from attending the ignorant, weak, indeciſive plans impoſed on them from the cabinet, and which their duty to their king reduced them to the neceſſity of attempting to execute.

In the mean time, the nation bleeds, from the fatal conſequences of this mixture of folly and injuſtice, while the Miniſters, are diffident of thoſe gallant and high-ſpirited men, whom they are conſcious they have baſely injured; and while they, on their ſide, are incenſed at the perfidy of adminiſtration, and ſhock-

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ed at the proſpect of ſerving under a ſet of men, from whoſe councils nothing but diſgrace and defeats can follow, our fleet remains without a commander; a ſtrong ſquadron of the enemy are now, and for weeks paſt have been, cruizing in the Channel; and there is not a flag officer, of the leaſt name, whom Lord Sandwich can aſk to accept, or who, if aſked, would accept, the command of an armament prepared to oppoſe them.

The people vainly flattered themſelves that the meeting of parliament would have brought them ſome relief and reſcued the nation from this ignominious, deſperate ſtate. They looked up to the hereditary counſellors of the throne, and guardians of our liberty; they looked up to the country gentlemen, whoſe intereſts are ſo deeply at ſtake, and whoſe independence, they hoped, was proof againſt venality and corruption; they looked up to their gracious and beloved Sovereign; they were in hopes that he would have been at length undeceived; that our repeated loſſes and diſappointments, which muſt have wrung his paternal heart, would, at leaſt, have rendered him diffident of the men from whoſe counſels they had proceeded, and have made him pay ſome attention to the numerous and reſpectable part of both houſes of parliament, who uniformly proteſted againſt them, and counſelled better things. Diſappointed in their hopes from a quarter whence their duty, their confidence, their affection, made them form the greateſt expectations, the moderate part of the nation tremble at the probable conſequences; they fear leſt the patience of the people ſhould be tired down, and they forced to ſpeak a language that *muſt be underſtood*. Our hiſtory affords but too many alarming inſtances of the violent

lent extremes to which the ſpirit of the nation may be tranſported under ſuch provocations.

Amidſt all our afflictions, may we of the preſent age never experience that extreme of miſery! May our gracious King continue to be reſpected, honoured, beloved, as his virtues deſerve! May the public deteſtation be directed againſt the real authors of our diſgrace, and confined to the only ſacrifices, which can be made with juſtice, to an inſulted, oppreſſed, and indignant people.

FINIS.